

W r e s t l i n g P e r s p e c t i v e

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South Broadway

By - Michael McGowen

If ever in St. Louis, take time to travel south from Busch Stadium on South Seventh Street towards the Anheuser-Busch brewery. Eventually you'll find yourself in the Soulard District, a neighborhood of beautifully renovated brick buildings, small shops, and wonderful little Irish bars that contain two St. Louis landmarks. The most well known is the Soulard Farmer's Market, an open air, fresh produce market that has operated since the 1790's. The other, known only to a small group of people, is the South Broadway Athletic Club on the corner of South Seventh Street and Shenandoah Avenue. What makes South Broadway so special is that every month it presents pro wrestling in the St. Louis tradition: an intimate atmosphere, few gimmicks, and loads of action.

The setting is reminiscent of the days of tapings in small television studios with a small, enthusiastic crowd close to the action. This crowd is primarily family and friends of the wrestlers which greatly adds to the fun-filled atmosphere. The wrestlers are local guys who put on matches in an entertaining, action-packed style that will delight any fan. South Broadway is the essence of pro wrestling in its purest form, one unburdened by steroid controversies, indifferent performances or bored crowds. It exemplifies all the reasons any hardcore became a fan in the first place. If you can't find something to enjoy here, you aren't really a wrestling fan.

But this isn't about South Broadway in particular. Rather, it's about today's independents in general. This scene can be found any week at small clubs, bars, or high school gyms across the country. The independents are the life blood of pro wrestling, the place where it truly begins. It is as much a family gathering as a sporting/entertainment event; a labor of love for the fans, the promoters, and the wrestlers.

Independent wrestlers are a special breed, throwbacks to the days of small smoky arenas and nameless small towns. Some are talented athletes waiting for their chance at discovery and national stardom, all the while honing their skills. Others are long-time veterans of the business, shut out of the "big-time," still longing for the thrill of being in the ring and the adulation of the fans. But, the majority are local guys who get in the ring maybe once a month to fulfill a dream. Guys who are still as much fans as wrestlers. There are not guaranteed, six-figure contracts or merchandise sales percentages here. It's really about the thrill of performing in the squared circle, of wearing a championship belt, and risking serious injuries and/or regular jobs.

The promotions themselves are as varied as the wrestlers who work for them. There are those like Portland

and Memphis, once part of the major league circuits, that still attract name talent not working for the national promotions. Some are evolving into regional promotions who groom young talent while holding a place for once big time talent, places like Pro Wrestling America and South Atlantic Pro Wrestling. Others are those who promote in one city only such as Windy City, Big D Pro Wrestling and South Broadway. Then there is the new phenomenon of a promotion beginning as a regional one using known talent cast off from WCW or the WWF: Smoky Mountain Wrestling. Plus there are the occasional one-time only shows that pop up from time to time. All represent the future of pro wrestling, surviving and keeping the business' aged heart beating while the national promotions wither away from horrible television ratings and nearly empty arenas.

If you are a jaded hardcore in need of a battery charge, a casual or serious fan looking for an alternative to expensive major league borefests or a new fan wanting to experience pro wrestling at its basic level, check out the nearest independent and see what I mean. I promise you won't regret it.

Sidelines

Thanks To Jeff Cohen for the plug. We appreciate the support.

Wrestling Then & Now has released a special issue dealing with racism in wrestling, which serves as a compliment to the Phantom's "History Of The Stereotype" series. *Wrestling Then & Now*, published by Evan Ginzburg, is available for \$1.25 an issue at PO Box 471, Oakland Gardens Station, Flushing, NY 11364.

Elise M. Skolnick has photos available of wrestlers including Jushin Liger, Ric Flair, Cactus Jack, Woman, Kerry Von Erich and more. For a list send a S.A.S.E. to: Elise M. Skolnick, 221 Stow Ave, Apt. A-1, Troy, NY 12180.

Billy Graham, Stan Lane, Ivan Koloff, Rockin' Robin, Tommy Young, Jim Duggan, Larry Sharpe, Special Delivery Jones and Angelo Poffo - what do they have in common? They are all part of *Wrestling Perspective: The Interviews*, a 60 page book chronicling the interviews that have appeared in *Wrestling Perspective* over the past two and a half years. This is a fantastic collection of insight, humor and intrigue that you are bound to read from cover to cover to cover to cover and over again. *Wrestling Perspective: The Interviews* is available for \$10 for subscribers and \$12 for non-subscribers. Quantities of this collection are limited, so send in your order today.

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The Back Issue Sale For The Discriminating Bargain Hunter • We're clearing out our inventory of back issues to give you the perfect opportunity to fill those gaps in your *Wrestling Perspective* collection. All back issues are available for \$1.00 for a single issue and \$.75 per issue when you order two or more. This type

of savings won't last forever, so order early and often. Below is our back issue inventory; supplies of some issues are limited, so please list alternates in case selections are out sold out.

Volume I, Issue 5: Doing the job, Tommy Young tribute, Portland wrestling, and baseball season.

Volume I, Issue 6: Eddie Gilbert's future, racism and wrestling, and the Ultimate Warrior.

Volume II, Issue 3: Sid Vicious' contract, suspension of reality, Hennig as WCW champion, Tommy Young interview and the Phantom of the Ring's debut column.

Volume II, Issue 4: Dusty Rhodes as a booker, George Hackenschmidt, non-fan's perception of wrestling, and Ric Flair.

Volume II, Issue 5: Global, hardcore fans, Herd and Rhodes, and screw job finishes.

Volume II, Issue 6: Wrestling fans, Lex Luger, steroids and Angelo Poffo interview.

Volume II, Issue 7: Sid Justice in the WWF and Stan Lane interview part I.

Volume II, Issue 8: Apter publications, Stan Lane interview part II and Flair as WWF champion.

Volume II, Issue 9: Flair vs. Hogan, Rockin' Robin interview and the 10 best tag teams of all time.

Volume III, Issue 23: Year end awards.

Volume III, Issue 24: Joel Goodhart, tape delay and steroids.

Volume III, Issue 25: Eddie Gilbert, Ivan Koloff interview part I (last issue old format).

Volume III, Issue 26: Watts and Rhodes, Koloff interview part II, and Martin Karadajian (first issue new format).

Volume III, Issue 27: Ron Simmons as WCW champion, Smoky Mountain, Flair, and Buddy Rogers tribute.

In Perspective: Jimmy Garvin

Jimmy Garvin accepted an offer in October from Bill Watts to buy out the remainder of his contract, which was set to expire in January 1994, for about \$180,000. In this interview with David Skolnick conducted on Oct. 19, 1992, Garvin candidly discusses the buyout, his feelings on the current WCW wrestling scene and his storied 23-year wrestling career which included successful stints in Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, Texas, the AWA and the NWA. In this interview, Garvin also discusses his wild life on the road, and his opinions on wrestlers having health insurance.

Wrestling Perspective: Why did you accept the buyout from World Championship Wrestling?

Jimmy Garvin: First of all, they have their way of running their company. It's their company and they're entitled to run it in the way they want to, like a person is entitled to run his own house the way he wants to, to run his own automobile the way he wants to. If you're paying for it, you do as you want to. That's pretty basic. It's their company, they're running it. They thought that it would be the best thing for me and they were probably comparing that to where I was sitting in the car. Which instead of having me sit in the trunk, the man that was in charge there - I have a lot of respect for. Rather than see me sit in the trunk, where he knows I don't belong, he was able to offer me this buyout and I was able to get my own car. That way, I can find myself a nice place to sit. I didn't have to accept it. But I don't think that would have helped me and I don't think it would have helped the company. I always did work for the company and the company's best interest and was always a real good employee. I never missed any shots, I never got busted for drugs or had drug problems. I always put forth in the ring to the best of my abilities, always conducted myself properly outside the ring in public so as not to give a bad reputation to TBS. The only reason I say those things is because not everybody is like that. So in a nut shell, I was a good employee for them and I think they know that.

WP: What were his reasons for phasing you out? What did he tell you?

JG: Looking back on that conversation, it took place in Macon at a TV, there just wasn't the type of situation going on that I would maybe fit into. Because he knows how seriously I take my wrestling and I've done business with him since 1971, he knows me since I was a kid. He's a smart guy. He's carrying a lot of so-called heat right now but that's a whole other story. I think I just didn't fit in with the story. That's understandable. It's like talking about the Bobby Eaton and Arn Anderson thing happening right now as far as what are they going to do in January. They're two of the greatest wrestlers this sport has, but you've got to make a change sometimes. After a while in wrestling anyway, you can't be there forever even though you'd like to be and think you can be. But the fact is after everybody's seen you for so long, my God, I think I would like to see a change if I was a fan.

WP: Did you think it was time to eliminate the Freebirds?

JG: Yeah, yeah, I think so, really.

WP: For the same reason that it's been so many years?

JG: I can reflect back on the Rock 'N Roll Express when they were younger and worked for Jim Crockett. At the very beginning, they were that teen idol type. Good looking, and I'm kind of stretching that. According to the promoters, they were good looking kids that drew a good crowd. Indeed they did. But now, five, six, seven years down the road, like presently they're being pushed in that respect with that Smoky Mountain outfit, I think after a while, it ain't. It's not a true character. When they were doing that they were in their element and it was believable. Because it was believable was that it was fact. Well, the Freebirds. The Freebirds raised hell for so long. I mean the Freebirds have been raising hell for so long. After a while, even like Easy Rider with Dennis Hopper and Peter Fonda. "God, man, you've got to settle down or something." So it was time in the Freebird legacy, we raised hell for years, and then of course Terry went to Japan and joined up with Doc and did his Oriental thing. Buddy retired with his family in Chicago and raised his boy and kind of hanging out. Me and Michael because we were the feistiest ones left are still, besides Terry who had his Oriental interest, we hooked up and rode hard and heavy for a few years. I got to say I'm kind of glad because it was starting to get to be a tough image to uphold and believe in what you were doing. It was a lot of late nights. There was a lot of drinking Jack Daniels when I didn't want to.

WP: Trying to live up to that Freebird image?

JG: I didn't try, I did. In living up to the Freebird image sometimes in a spot where being in a public place or bar for instance, a place where we would sing. That environment was there and wow, man, I've been to the moon and back. But I think I want to get off. That kind of help make up my mind too. I was very into the Freebird thing. I thought it was a lot of fun and everything, but I think there are other things to do too. The Freebird thing, I'll never forget what we did and the records that we still hold. That last true rebels without a cause.

WP: What do you think of the way they're pushing Michael now?

JG: He's doing the color commentating and sometimes managing. Bill Watts always did think Michael Hayes was a much better manager than he was a wrestler. Michael Hayes can street fight pretty good, never could wrestle worth a shit (laughs). His contract's still good through '94. I think they did a partial buyout which they said they were going to take him off the road and he was supposed to do commentating. They thought that's where his direction was and he's a pretty good commentator, a good commentator. Maybe in

'94, in January, they won't think so. I don't know. You get what I mean? They got to do something with him or buy him out.

WP: You had a deal 'til January '94.

JG: So did Michael. I struck that deal with Kip Frey.

WP: Was there a one-year option as far as them not telling you if they were going to pick you up or not? From what I've read, they didn't want to but they came in after the deadline.

JG: I was under that impression for a while, but that really was not the case. You're talking about the deal before the two-year when Herd was here. What it was we had a year and we had the roll over type thing, but in investigating the innards of this contract - myself and my lawyer read all that stuff - it basically said they had everything and I had nothing (laughs).

WP: Much like most contracts.

JG: Yeah. What it was there was no clause in there that said, "If we're not notified within x amount of days, our contract rolls over," even though we thought there was. Actually, it was not. The clause was something to the effect that they got x amount of days to give you in writing that they're going to renew you. But if they don't, well, that's the end of that. They weren't going to. They were going to shit can us. Jim Herd, for some reason, he was like Clinton. You talk to him for one minute and he loved the Birds. The next minute, he hated us with a passion. So I never knew what he was doing. I had a feeling it wasn't that he hated our guts, but that we were expensive for the company to an extent. Not as expensive as other people. He said, "The next guys up for renewal, to cut money back, shit can them." It just so happened to be us up next in line. Whether that was a coincidence or whether that was because Herd was basically a piece of shit. He just was. The guy was just a jack off. He didn't know nothing about our company or our business, but he thought he did. He just treated people like shit. That's what I feel about him. He's gone and I'm still here. Last time I heard, he was trying to sell TV time for a hockey team out in Denver or something. Then what happened was Kip Frey took over and we went in and had the meeting with Kip Frey. I love Kip Frey. I'm looking at my motorcycle now because I keep it in my office. It's called Kip after Mr. Kip Frey because of the lucrative deal he pulled out for us. He did it because he recognized talent when he saw it. In the meeting, he was talking about one year and he'd give us all a raise, give Michael and me a raise. I just spoke up before I thought because that's the way I could talk to him. "Me and Michael have been around a long time, me more than Michael. I've been in this business 23 years. This living year to year really kind of sucks. Give us at least a two-year deal." That's basically how I told him. Two years will at least give us some time. I said, "Give us two" and I threw in another figure for a raise that second year. He said, "Aww, I can't do that. I can't do that. But I'll give you guys two years at x amount of dollars" and we said, "Great. You got a deal." We were ready to bust our asses to do whatever was necessary. That's how we are. We're from the old school. We could do it. That's a lot different than what's going on today. You've got people that look like they can do it, but whether they can do it or not is the question. That's how the two-year deal came up.

WP: Watts is in now. Overall, has he helped or hurt the company?

JG: Looking at it from a bookkeeper's point of view, he's helped the company. He's helped the company save a lot of money. He saved a lot of money. Now in doing so, according to the accountants and the comptrollers, he's done good for the company. As far as the interest and well-being and overall general attitude of the talent, it's been catastrophic. Number one, everybody's in a real shitty mood. That's not good.

The only one that's probably not in a real shitty mood is the one that's making \$700,000 a year for the next five years or something like that. I don't care how or what's going on, you can't be in a bad mood making that much money for that length of time. But you've got guys underneath there that are struggling and striving and what has happened recently from what I understand is that now Turner is not paying any medical. That sucks. None of Turner's people would ever do that to the boys before Watts came along. At least they had a little bit of respect for the guys. Now Watts is saying, "Hey, screw these guys, man. Basically 90 percent of these guys can't do anything else but this. Where are they going to go and make this kind of money." These are pretty good facts, but they're not all true. Even if they were, what right would a person have to take away someone's medical when he goes out in a ring in St. Louis and blows his knee completely out. They're not going to pay his doctor's bill while he's laid up in a hospital bed?

WP: And now that he's pushing for a stiffer style.

JG: Yeah. Did you hear the same thing about that about discontinuing the medical?

WP: As far as new contracts.

JG: Garbagemen have medical. God bless them. If it wasn't for garbagemen, we would really be in a mess. But at least they have medical. When you take away the guys medical, that's just terrible. The way it is now, unless you pay very high, astronomically high premiums, we don't get no medical unless it's carried by the office. If you go to Blue Cross and Blue Shield or Mutual of Omaha and say, "Look, I'm a wrestler and I travel 250 days a year and I wrestle at least that many times and more actually with double shots and TV tapings. I need some hospitalization." Well, yeah, right. Looking at it from that side of the fence, he's hurt the boys in that way. I don't think he should have done that. I'm nobody to judge. This is just my own opinion, but I think the boys should always have medical, for Christ sake.

WP: What's morale like in the locker room?

JG: Thank goodness, I can honestly tell you I haven't got a clue. I haven't been there (laughs). I can also tell you that I will not know in the near future because I will not be there.

WP: What do you think the future of the promotion looks like?

JG: From talking to my friends in the dressing rooms, the situation sucks. Fining galore. There's fining for everything in the world. What it looks like in January, there will be no Arn and Bobby, they'll probably lose another few guys, key guys, and Watts will end up taking these guys that will work for nothing. It's not their fault that they will work for nothing. You have to understand where they're at in the chain. When you're that low on the chain, I worked for nothing almost when I started. Thank God, that time's over with. These guys have got to go through that. They had a payroll of millions and millions and give Watts about a year and the payroll will be one-third of that. He's got some stars. He might have some good guys come along. I would say whatever Watts is doing, I'm sure he's got a plan. I'm sure it's a calculated direction he's going. He's not crazy and he's not stupid. He's got Dusty Rhodes right along with him.

WP: Does Dusty support him?

JG: Dusty would support anything that would keep him a job. He needs the money too. He's killed so many guys. He's ruined so many guys. I've known this guy since I was 19 years old. For some reason, he never did like me.

WP: Why is wrestling in such bad shape now?

JG: It's gone through so much. It's taken a lot of bad licks, but when you say it's in bad shape, really it isn't in that bad of shape. Look at Vince's business as far as production, look at his marketing at what he's pulling in. He's got to be operating in the black.

WP: I would think so, but if it wasn't for Europe, he'd probably be in a lot of trouble. He was brilliant enough to find a new market.

JG: Yeah and maybe let this one over here calm down. Wrestling's been through so much. It's a miracle that it's still around. You think about it. It's been through all kinds of shit. It's been exposed, it's been overexposed. People make it worse than kind of it really was. It's still here and people go. It's just one of those things. People still love to see wrestling. It's going to hurt, but it's going to be like the human body. It will heal itself back.

WP: They brought Precious in for a couple of shots - the pay-per-view and the funny video.

JG: They were giving us a little bit to mess around with when we did that hopefully entertaining piece. The direction with Precious at that Jacksonville pay-per-view, then it got all distorted and turned around and it didn't work out. Patty didn't want nothing to do with it anyway. She did it as a favor to me to come back for free and do it because I asked here. She basically quit at the right time when she wanted to. When she left that was it as far as the valets go. Nobody ever followed here. They tried. She just kind of wanted to be remembered that way.

WP: Why don't we talk about your career? How did you get started?

JG: My family has apartment houses in Florida and they're still standing too. I was born and raised in West Tampa. We had Joe Scarpa, Chief Jay Strongbow, had him living as a tenant. To make a very long story kind of short, he saw me one Saturday messing around. I was nine years old at the time. He asked me, he saw me wrestling around the yard, if I was interested in wrestling. I was always interested in wrestling. He asked me if I was interested in going out and trying out for a special school, which at the time, Eddie Graham was operating and doing a wonderful job. Him and Coach John Heath at 106 North Albany, where Mike Graham, who at the time was about 10 years old, was involved in this wrestling camp developed for younger kids. He was always big into the Florida Sheriff Boys Ranch or whatever that was trying to help the young kids of Florida. I said, "Sure, I'd be interested." So Joe Scarpa said, "Okay. It's this Saturday at 10 o'clock" or something like that. So we went down there and I never seen such a sight in my life. I remember going into the Sportatorium in 1961, I guess. A bunch of guys throwing each other around; a bunch of amateurs. Anyway, I got involved in it that way. I started training under Coach John Heath, went to the 1961 or 1962, I can't remember, State AAU finals in Jacksonville, Florida, at the military base, which I would have won that year, but I got my arm broke in a move. I went behind my opponent and waistlocked him and was going to take him down and he grapevined my leg and I fell back over on my elbow. My weight and his weight caused a crack in the mat. Compound fracture in my left arm pretty bad, my left elbow. So that was the end of that. Then I wrestled through junior high and high school up in here, Charlotte at Garrison, up in Ontario, where I went to school for a while. Chipawah and North Bay, Ontario.

WP: Was this when your mother married Ronnie?

JG: Yeah. We were traveling so I was still wrestling after she met Ronnie. We were living in Charlotte for a while. Then when I was 17, that's when I turned pro in Phoenix, Arizona, for Ernie Mohammed. How that

happened, we were all Ronnie, Terry Garvin, were in Charlotte. They were working for old man Crockett at the time and shit, man, I was ready. I was ready to get my ass kicked. I didn't care. I didn't know nothing about it either. I was in the ring in Arizona and I was a manager for Terry Garvin. Terry Garvin told me, "When I turn the referee around, you kick him in the back." Well, I thought, "Okay." I wasn't thinking of the guy on the mat. He turned the referee around and I was supposed to go kick the guy in the head laying down. Well, I came off the ropes and gave the referee a big knee in the back (laughs). But that's what he told me to do. "When I turn the referee around, you kick him in the back." He trained me to listen to everything he said and do exactly as I was told. I had no idea. When I was in the ring I was ready to try to kick some ass. It was a few months before I realized.

WP: This was before you were 18?

JG: Yeah, I was 17 years old. I was just a kid, kind of. I was working on Friday and Saturday night and I was making \$200 a week. I had the rest of the time off. That was my first pay. Then I went from there to Mobile, Alabama, in 1970 and worked with the Fields. I got a deal there. I was making \$20 a night and that kind of sucked.

WP: Sounds like Memphis today.

JG: Yeah (laughs). At least \$20 back in 1970 was not too bad (laughs). It wasn't too good, but it wasn't too bad for an 18-year-old kid. I was getting experience. It was like going to school plus I was watching Bobby Shane, Frankie Kane, all these old timers that people don't have any idea who I'm talking about. I can think of more, but it will take us all night. I messed around there for a while and then in 1971, that's when I had my first riot in Laurel, Mississippi. I almost got killed. Me and Terry Garvin and Bobby Shane, we had a short guy named Beauregard and Bobby Shane had his valet, Sherry. We got separated. A fight broke out and we got separated. I made a dash for the stage. I got hit in the head about a hundred times. I had about half my hair pulled out and crawled up on this old wooden stage, crawled underneath the curtain. My nose was busted and rolled over and laid on a bench. My nose was all a mess. I was hurting like hell, scared half to death and Lee Fields came in and said, "Hmm. You don't look too good kid. Here's your \$20 and here's \$5 extra for the riot." And I took it and said, "Thanks." That's how I came up. I took it and said, "Thanks." I almost got killed for five bucks and wow, \$25. I think after that they gave me a raise cause they figured I was there to stay. I was going to make it one way or another. From there I went to Bill Watts. The legendary Bill Watts and Leroy McGuirk in '71 and '72. I really learned a lot.

WP: Did you know what you were getting yourself into?

JG: By then, I was catching on. By now, I was still too small to wrestle so I was still managing. I got very good at it. At that time in the early seventies, like '71, I was of age where the (military draft) lottery was going hot and heavy. I was at the TV at Wichita Falls, Texas, doing interviews and in between interviews I was watching the lottery numbers come up. You kept your eyes pressed. By then I was 18 years old, I was driving a brand new Lincoln Continental, I was making pretty good money for Bill. For an 18-year-old in '71, I was pulling in somewhere like \$800, \$1,000 a week, \$4,000 a month. I didn't have nothing but my new Lincoln Continental to worry about. Back then, you could buy a new Lincoln for \$8,000 or \$9,000 so that was no big deal. Except it was when I thought about I'm going to go from bleach blonde hair making \$4,000 a month driving a brand new Lincoln to a shaved head wearing green army fatigues fighting for something I didn't believe in. I'll defend my country and I don't want to sound by no means unpatriotic. But that was way too much. If we're going to war, let's not even talk about how I feel about the Vietnam War and how those boys

got shafted when they got home. How they got sent over there and got murdered for economic reasons. Anyway I was worried about the draft and I had to go through it two years in a row cause when I was 19, they still had it. That was the last time. Lucky for me, my lottery numbers were way too high both years. Unless it's a national emergency. They wouldn't have had to ask me to go under those circumstances. I would go. But I worked two years for Cowboy Bill Watts and Leroy McGuirk and did really good and worked with Bobby Shane and Danny Hodge, Lou Thesz. In fact, Bill Watts had to save me once with Danny Hodge. He went nuts on me in Jackson, Mississippi, cause we had TV cameras there. He was just that way. His eyes would roll back in his head.

WP: And he'd hook you up.

JG: Aww, bad. Real bad. Plus 18 years old and here's Danny Hodge. He's already been on the cover of Sports Illustrated. A boxing and wrestling champion at the same time. He tears shower handles off with his bare hands, crushes regular potatoes and breaks pliers, he's got the double tendons in his hands. He told Jack Brisco terrible things about what he'd do to him on the side of the highway one night cause Jack was talking about how he could take Danny. Boy, oh boy, they pulled up on the side of the road and Danny was in the right position. He went behind Jack Brisco. Jack don't want to mess with Danny no more (laughs). Danny was on shaky ground. He was terrible. Bill did come in and save me that night. That was pretty funny. I found some old film that Scott Goldstein has in Philadelphia.

WP: From Watts you went to where?

JG: I was having some flashbacks to the Watts territory. They used to drive our asses off. In 1972, we left Bill and in 1973, we went to work for the legendary Nick Gulas. In Tennessee, we got Ronnie to come in. That's when Ronnie joined us. First, we had Duke Myers for a little while. We had Bobby Shane in Oklahoma a little bit. Then he went to Georgia about the same time we went into Tennessee. He went to Georgia in '73. He got killed in '75. He went his way and we went ours. We hooked up with Ronnie in '73. Had a great time. Just traveled around and drew money and had fun. We worked with a bunch of good guys. Then in '74, we went down to Atlanta and that's when Jim Barnette was there. He was the man in charge. Ann Gunkel was running the other side of the show, the other part of town. They were head-to-head. So that was pretty interesting. We got to work with Bob Armstrong, Johnny Walker, Tim Woods. In '75, Ronnie split somewhere and Terry and I went to Australia because Bobby Shane was helping book over there. It was Larry O'Day and Ron Villa and a money man involved; I forgot his name. I went to Australia for about six weeks and kind of hated that shit. I was away. I got married in '72 to Patty. She was on the road with me and that was all new. It was all new to me much less taking a young bride to North Bay, Ontario, which is way up north, into an environment like what the Garvin Brothers and all that was involved in. My gosh.

WP: She adapted from what I saw.

JG: She did a great job. So I quit in 1975. I had made some investments in land up in Canada on a lake, lake property. A guy up there helping me said, "Hey, I've got a butcher shop. Would you be interested in buying that and hanging around here for a while?" This butcher shop had been in business 40, 50 years and the guy was dying of throat cancer and he wanted to sell it. So I bought it and I didn't know nothing about butchering. But I learned and ran a good business. We grossed \$240,000, \$250,000 a year selling meat. I also imported seafood in northern Ontario. I was carrying that. That's a whole bunch of meat and seafood and that's a lot of work. On top of that, I was 23 years old or 21, I was American and I was in northern Ontario where, number one, they hate Americans. Number two, they really hate young Americans and number three, they really hate

young Americans with money. So I didn't get along with them at all. They hated me and I hated them. I was just miserable, miserable. I stayed up there about a year and a half and left. I sold the business and left. I went to California and hooked up with Terry, Pat Patterson, Roy Shires and started running California. We had Santa Mosa, Reno, running spot shows and stuff. We had fun, but that got old too. I didn't like California too much.

WP: What was Shires like? He just died.

JG: Oh God, he was grouchy. A grouchy, old guy. God bless him and everything, but he was miserable, just miserable. He was grouchy and miserable. I hope he's happy now.

WP: He ran a hell of a promotion for a while.

JG: Yes, he did. Certainly did. I think that had a lot to do with who was around him. Remember he had Ray Stevens and Pat Patterson when they were in their prime. He had Peter Maivia, Pepper Gomez, he had Ripper Collins, he had an assortment of Samoans that would just pack that Cow Palace. That's all that's around there anyway back then. He had good talent around him and he did do well. After California, that's when, about '76, went down to Florida. I went down to Florida and...

WP: You met Dusty Rhodes.

JG: Yeah, Christ, I had to dodge bullets from '76 on. I got more bullet hole wounds from him than the man on the moon. Florida was real interesting part of my career. I met the Briscos, which is enough. Traveling with the Briscos for years which I did is a book in itself. I've got a lot of respect for those two guys. A lot of respect for them. I met everybody down there, King Curtis, Bob Orton, the list goes on and on. Eddie Graham, doing business with the legendary Eddie Graham. He was a genius. Sometimes I see his son, Mike, and I can just see Eddie talking to me. They're so much alike. I went through a lot of experienced down there. I started to learn, I had a general idea of what I wanted to do. Me and David Von Erich ran together down there. Jos LeDuc, these are legendary party animals to say the least. Don Muraco, Dicky Slater, the list goes on and on. I was wild that's all I can say in '76, '77. I left in '77 to go to Memphis, my first daughter was born in Memphis in August '77. I stayed there for a little while, a year maybe six months. I moved to Charlotte and stayed there for six months. What I was doing was I had a pretty good run in Florida, then I went out for a year because I needed some more polish. I came back in '78 and '78, '79. I had tons more experience than all the younger guys. As it stands right now with the 23 years I've got more experience than about anybody else still active. I'm in between planets right now. I stayed there and worked with Killer Karl Kox, Buddy Rogers managed me, Killer Karl Kox managed me. That's where J.J. Dillon managed me.

The History Of The Stereotype - Part III

By - The Phantom Of The Ring

When we last left wrestling, it was in the Roaring Twenties and the Great Depression of the thirties was about to crash in and nearly bankrupt the game. The middle class was broke; those who still had money chose to spend it on other worthwhile amusements, such as baseball, boxing and football. The wrestling crowd had narrowed to the working classes. The underswelling of ethnics that Jack Pfeffer had pandered to in the twenties was to become the mainstay of fan support in the thirties. From the thirties onward, promoters would

be guided by the working class mentality in their concept of the game. To begin with, the working class was not nearly as educated as the middle class gentry and, so, the first thing to go was the pure imitation of a sport. In its stead came the morality play, with the hero versus villain.

Now, this had come before the thirties. The late teens and the early twenties saw the advent of the rule breaker, but it was never on such a large scale as during the thirties. History, or what passes for history in wrestling, records that Rudy Dusek was the first big time heel. It is most interesting to note that Dusek developed on the carny circuit, for in the future, 98 percent of the heels were to develop in this manner (let it be noted for the record that "carny-circuit" also includes training schools run by wrestlers). Big name amateurs were still recruited, but they would become glamorous babyfaces. The wrestler who worked his way up the ranks without the benefit of an established reputation usually began as a heel and remained that way throughout his career. It was easier to get the boos and be hated than to try to appeal to the crowd with somewhat dubious skills and an unknown face and name.

Thus, if Jim Browning entered the sport with his tremendous amateur background and media fame, he would automatically be a babyface. Stan Kowalski, on the other hand, would usually be cast as a heel. If he didn't look particularly Polish, his name might be changed to Bonebreaker Smith. If he looked really Polish, he would don a hood and wrestle as the Masked Marvel. If Kowalski could really wrestle and was over with the fans (a tricky proposition, this, for a Pole might be popular hero in Milwaukee, with a large Polish population, but bomb in Irish Boston), he would be brought along slowly. The advent of the tag team helped this process along considerably, for Kowalski could now be hidden in a team with a more experienced wrestler who would make sure Kowalski learned the trade.

The thirties also saw the debut of another modern day staple of wrestling: the stereotype. Whereas in the past, many ethnic wrestlers were used and pushed by various promoters, the promoters were careful not to present them in anything but the best possible light. Not so with non-white wrestlers; for them, the rules of fair play were out the window.

The first known stereotype was Chief Bearclaws Chewacki, who debuted in California sometime in 1937. In real life, Chewacki was Benny Tenario, a Chicano wrestler who was born too soon to wrestle as himself. In order to work, he had to don the Indian feathers and war-whoop it up. Tenario later went on to a distinguished career in the ring, but only as various Indian characters. His best known character was Chief Kit Fox, which he used all over the world. He was a big hit with this character down under, where an American Indian was indeed novel, and for the most part, Indians were babyfaces. The only way African-Americans could wrestle whites in the thirties and forties was in the guise of an Indian. In a display of tackiness not limited to the wrestling world, they were usually billed as being from the "Blackfoot" tribe as wrestling was still a white man's world.

The next to suffer the stereotypical paintbrush were Asians. Until the thirties, Asian wrestlers were looked upon with respect, and, sometimes awe, as in the case of the Great Gama. Matsuda Sorakichi, the great Japanese wrestlers who toured the states during the 1880's, was billed as one of the greatest champions who ever donned the tights. Japanese wrestlers were few in the twenties, confined mostly to the West Coast, but highly respected and allowed to wrestle without resorting to self-parody. Keep in mind that Hollywood generally treated the Asian with respect; witness Charlie Chan or Mr. Moto, or even Fu Manchu (though no

Asian actor was ever allowed to play these roles). African-Americans, on the other hand, were treated with disdain at best and outright humiliation at worst.

In the late thirties, Pfeffer introduced the idea of the turbaned Hindu who wrestled dirty. Pfeffer was no doubt inspired by the huge success of Gunga Din and was probably the first promoter who cashed in on a popular movie. This alone was trend setting when one considers how many wrestling characters have been inspired by hit movies. The character went over big, and inspired Pfeffer to expand with Arab parodies. One of his characters, Ali Baba, was actually allowed to win the World's Championship. Paul Browser countered in 1938 with Sheik Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia, get it?) who was supposed to be dark, dashing and a great fighter. He was none of these, however, and soon disappeared from the mat.

As the second World War approached, there came with it a definite change - for the worse. Japanese wrestlers were now exclusively heels, if they could get work at all. The change didn't really affect German or Italian wrestlers, there were too many German and Italian customers for that to change. Furthermore, they were Americans and the Japanese were not, even though the Japanese wrestling in the States were born in America. But also note that their place of birth didn't exactly stop them from being interred in concentration camps during the war.

World War II was to change everything for wrestling. The matches lacked the usual ballyhoo due to the war, and heels were pretty much in the stock mold. It wasn't until the advent of television that wrestling reaped the full benefits of the war's aftermath and the stereotype as such took on mythic proportions.

Part IV: The Coming Of Television And New Opportunities For Insensitivity

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